

August 14, 1959

Anne W. Wheaton, Acting Press Secretary to the President

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THE WHITE HOUSE

## STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have today approved H. R. 6769, which makes appropriations for fiscal 1960 for the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare, and for certain other agencies.

I have taken this action despite concern with regard to the appropriations for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

First, with respect to medical research, every American is of course deeply interested in the improvement of health. This interest is reflected in the Administration's progressive record of support for health activities. But there is a limit to the rate at which medical research can grow and yet grow soundly. Appropriations to the National Institutes of Health have increased fourfold in the last six years. H. R. 6769 would add a further increase -- from \$294 million to \$400 million -- or 36% in a single year. This increase gives me cause for concern on three grounds. I am concerned lest it should:

- (1) Lower the quality of the projects supported by increasing the flow of grant applications more rapidly than the procedures for their careful appraisal can be effectively adapted;
- (2) Cause too great a diversion into research of the manpower and other resources needed for equally vital teaching and medical practice;
- (3) Substitute Federal funds for non-Federal support of medical research and training and discourage further expansion of such support.

Such effects would work against the very goal being sought -- improved health for all the American people. Indeed, the Congress itself apparently felt concerned about the possible lowering of research quality which might result from the level of funds it approved, since the conference report on H. R. 6769 states that "there should be no reduction in the high standards for determining the acceptability of research projects for financing from these appropriations."

Because the American taxpayer is entitled to have his tax money spent wisely and efficiently, I am directing the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service to take appropriate steps to satisfy themselves that the following criteria will be observed in the review of any new research project or training program:

- (1) That it is of such high priority and great promise that its deferment would be likely to delay progress in medical discovery;
- (2) That it will not result in the harmful diversion of manpower and other resources needed for teaching and medical care services; and

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(3) That it will not bring about the substitution of Federal for non-Federal sources of support for medical research and training.

Second, in the category of construction grant programs -- grants for the construction of sewage treatment plants, facilities for medical care and research, and schools in Federally affected areas -- the appropriations made in the bill would provide for program levels which seem to me to be entirely too high in relation to other essential Government programs.

I do not doubt that worthwhile construction projects can be found in each of these areas which will absorb the funds appropriated. But the mere fact that money is spent for some identifiable need does not mean that it is wisely spent, or that it must be spent by the Federal Government. With respect to the waste treatment construction grant program, I am requesting the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to urge the States, in their various State plans, to make every effort to give first priority in the approval of projects by the States to those which involve interstate stream pollution or affect downstream communities.

A national budget demands hard choices just as does a family budget. The recognition of a need is the beginning, not the end, of any budget-making process. I recognize, however, that in reconciling competing demands within the total framework of a sound fiscal policy, the Congress, as well as the Executive Branch, has responsibility for the exercise of judgment. Therefore, even though I disagree in this instance with the manner in which that judgment has been exercised, I do not feel that I should withhold my approval of this bill.

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